

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WASHINGTON - The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), a bipartisan and independent federal agency, will hold a press conference to discuss the impact of recent events on U.S. policy toward Vietnam. Commission Chair Michael K. Young, Vice Chair Nina Shea, and Commissioner Khaled Abou El Fadl will be joined by members of Congress to discuss the imprisonment of Father Thaddeus Nguyen Van Ly, the sentencing last week of his niece and nephews, and other recent human rights violations that highlight the overall lack of basic fundamental freedoms in Vietnam. The Commission raised its concerns with Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly and called for the immediate release of Fr. Ly and his family members. The USCIRF has also recommended to Secretary of State Colin Powell that Vietnam be designated a "country of particular concern" (CPC) for its ongoing and egregious abuses of religious freedom.

"The imprisonment of Fr. Ly, his relatives, and the many other political and religious prisoners in Vietnam is a major impediment to expanded relations between our two countries. This blatant disregard of the most basic human rights makes clear why Vietnam should be immediately designated a CPC," said Young.

When: Wednesday, September 17, 2003, 11:30-12:00 p.m.

Where: Cannon House Office Building, Room 334 (CHOB)

1st St. and Independence Ave., SE

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom was created by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 to monitor the status of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief abroad, as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and related international instruments, and to give independent policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State and the Congress.

- Dean Michael K. Young ,
- Felice D. Gaer ,